



OHIO HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

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Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources

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Chairman Souder and distinguished members of this committee, all of us in law enforcement are grateful to you for taking the time to allow us to address the committee about drug law enforcement and, specifically, our methamphetamine epidemic here in Ohio.

Before proceeding with my recommendations, I would like to emphasize that the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) is the lead state agency in addressing the meth lab problem in Ohio. This is a relatively small agency with less than 30 narcotic agents for the entire state. BCI&I has put on four 40-hour Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory Certification Schools for local law enforcement officers and issued all of the safety equipment to each student. BCI&I also provides the mandatory annual recertification training around the state.

I must mention that in the early years of our methamphetamine problem in Ohio, the Drug Enforcement Administration provided many BCI&I Special Agents and local task force officers with expert training and expensive safety equipment that enabled state and local officers to take down meth labs around the state.

The Ohio HIDTA does fill a gap and provides much needed training in the above subject matter and is greatly adding to state and federal efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR THE OHIO METHAMPHETAMINE EPIDEMIC

Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (JAG)

State and local law enforcement has been left to deal with the problem since DEA does not have the manpower to cope with the problem. HIDTA funded and Byrne/JAG funded task forces have been handling the vast majority of these small labs. As the problem worsens, state and local resources are being taxed beyond their limits. The Byrne/JAG funding is the lifeblood of local drug task forces in Ohio. The cuts in Byrne/JAG funding will cause some of our local task forces to shut down altogether and the effectiveness of the remaining task forces will be greatly diminished. I would beg you to fully restore this funding. If and when we get the “mom and pop” meth labs under control, we will no doubt see an increase in bulk methamphetamine coming into Ohio from the southwest border. The work of the Ohio HIDTA initiatives will continue to include the dismantling of methamphetamine trafficking organizations as a top priority.

DEA Super Fund

Hazardous waste cleanup has been handled exclusively with DEA funded hazardous waste companies. There is no local funding available for handling hazardous waste. This federal funding must continue.

COPS Methamphetamine

The Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification & Investigation (BCI&I) has educated hundreds of law enforcement officers, firefighters and social workers in clandestine methamphetamine lab awareness. This training continues to be critical to officer safety. Without federal funding, this training will decrease significantly.

Ohio BCI&I has trained and equipped approximately 200 local law enforcement officers to dismantle clan labs. The funding for training and equipping these officers has been almost

exclusively from COPS Methamphetamine grant money. Many communities throughout Ohio are in an economic crisis. Without federal funding, this equipment and training will no longer be available. It is imperative that the COPS Methamphetamine funding be continued.

HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA PROGRAM

The Ohio HIDTA has done a great deal to support local law enforcement in its battle against methamphetamine and if funding continues, our HIDTA can continue to do more. Proposed cuts in this program, less than a year after adding six new southern/central counties, is counter productive. One of the critical issues this committee must consider is whether the slashing of federal funding for drug law enforcement is beneficial to the country.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

In terms of drug law legislation, the single most important step that the Congress could take would be to make pseudoephedrine a controlled substance and place all products containing pseudoephedrine behind the pharmacy counter. Those purchasing such products would be required to produce a driver's license or other official identification and sign a register. They would be limited to two or three boxes of such products at a time. Legislation in the State of Oklahoma enacted this kind of law two years ago and has reduced their number of "mom and pop" meth labs by 80%.

I cannot stress enough the importance of this legislation. Thank you for listening.